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ABSTRACT

Patterns of attrition at a midwestern research university were examined through telephone interviews of 622 students who had left the institution prematurely and through analysis of institutional data to compare school leavers with those who stayed. This comparison found that school leavers were more likely to have lower college admission test scores, be Hispanic (but less likely to be African American), and more likely to have an educational loan. Reasons given by students for leaving the university were diverse, and included (in order of frequency mentioned): family or personal problems, financial difficulties, felt faculty didn't care about students, unable to get needed academic advice, believed that program in preferred academic area was poor, and felt that classes were poorly taught. Results suggest that student/institutional mismatch is a major reason for students leaving. The following recommendations are offered: (1) establish an early alert system; (2) fully utilize the campus learning center; (3) enhance financial resources and strengthen financial advising; and (4) strengthen professional and peer advising efforts. Five tables detail the study's findings. (Contains 16 references.) (DB)

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Students Who Left College:
An Examination of Their Characteristics and Reasons for Leaving

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This paper was presented at the Thirty-Ninth Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research held in Seattle, Washington, May 30-June 3, 1999.
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Dolores Vura
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Students Who Left College:

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Abstract

Personal, financial, and academic circumstances often interfere with students' retention. It is essential to understand these circumstances to help students succeed in higher education. The purpose of this study is to examine reasons for attrition at a Mid-western research university hoping to improve the retention rate and ultimately students' success rate in achieving a bachelor's degree. A telephone survey was conducted with 622 students who left the institution. Results of the survey and institutional data are analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Discussions of implications and suggestions for improving campus retention rates will also be an important part of the presentation.

Students Who Left College:

An Examination of Their Characteristics and Reasons for Leaving

Attrition is costly in at least two ways for institutions of higher education. First, when a student leaves an institution, it is a loss for the student regarding the student's development the institution could help enhance (Li, Long, & Simpson, 1999; Rendon, Terenzini, & Gardner, March 18, 1999). Based on an extensive review of more than 20 years' literature regarding college impact, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) observed, "Students not only make statistically significant gains in factual knowledge and in a range of general cognitive and intellectual skills, they also change on a broad array of value, attitudinal, psychosocial, and moral dimensions" (p. 557). Second, when a student leaves an institution, it is a loss of revenue for the institution, especially for the tuition driven institutions (Tinto, 1993). Thus, retaining as many students as possible has become a priority for many institutions of higher education. The emphasis on retention has been evidenced in the establishment of numerous retention committees and task forces on many campuses across the nation. The difficulty, however, in understanding the variable nature of student attrition makes mounting successful retention strategies difficult.

For years, researchers have been studying different factors that may potentially contribute to individual decisions to stay in or leave higher education. For example, Tinto (1975, 1993), building upon the work of Spady (1970), used the academic and social integration model to examine student retention. He argued that the more a student became integrated into the academic and social systems of a university, the more committed the student would be to the goal of college completion. Similarly, Astin (1984) examined retention from students' involvement perspective. He contended that students' involvement on campus contributed to persistence whereas lack of involvement was related to student attrition. According to Astin (1984), involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience. While evidence suggests that both students' integration and involvement are related to retention, researchers have found that a wide range of factors that

influence students' decisions to stay in or leave higher education (Arnold, Mares, & Calkins, 1986; Astin, 1984; Moline 1987; Mohr, Eiche, & Sedlacek, 1998; Nora, 1987; Tinto, 1975, 1993).

Some factors that have been found related to retention are students' previous academic performance, ethnic background, or socioeconomic status. Tinto (1993) found that students of higher academic ability were more likely to complete a four-year degree within six years. Likewise, other researchers also discovered that poor academic preparation and academic performance affected retention (Arnold, Mares, & Calkins, 1986; Moline 1987; Nora, 1987). In fact, withdrawal from higher education may be, in some cases, "involuntary" because of students' poor academic performance (Tinto, 1975). Among students of different ethnicity, non-minority students are more likely to graduate than African-American or Hispanic students (Arnold, Mares, & Calkins, 1986; Tinto, 1993). Additionally, the socioeconomic status of students is positively related to the likelihood that students will complete a four-year degree within six years (Tinto, 1993; U.S. Department of Education, 1998).

Financial aid is another important factor in students' persistence in higher education (Moline, 1987). Lack of adequate financial support often causes students' premature departure (Astin, 1975; Arnold, Mares, & Calkins, 1986; Mohr, Eiche, & Sedlacek, 1998). While grants (i.e., non-repayable "gift") had a small positive effect on persistence, loans (i.e., money that has to be repaid with some interest) had a negative effect on persistence (Astin, 1975). In contrast, the U.S. Department of Education found that students who received aid were more likely to get a bachelor's degree than students who did not get any aid, regardless of the type of the aid, loan, or grant (U.S. Department of Education, 1998).

Another factor that influences students' premature departure from college is poor college "fit" as perceived by students or mismatch of students' interests with the academic programs offered by the institution (Tinto in Spann, 1990). Tinto, in his interview by Nancy Spann (1990), discussed three different kinds of "match" or "fit": academic ability, academic program relevancy, and feeling of belonging. Some students leave because of poor academic performance or academic failure; others leave for other institutions because of specific academic or career reasons. "The receiving institution has an academic program that the sending school does not offer or has a stronger reputation in a particular

discipline" (Janasievicz, 1987, p. 28). Simply put, a student leaves an university or college voluntarily or involuntarily when studies become too difficult or when "there is not a good 'fit' between what the campus offers and what the student expects or wants" (Noel, 1978, p. viii).

Finally, personal concerns are often factors that contribute to students' decisions to leave a university or college before graduating. Some of these personal concerns include marriage, family responsibilities, health problems, and accepting a new job (Arnold, Mares, & Calkins, 1986; Tinto, 1993). These external responsibilities or concerns often cause a student to leave a university or college.

Clearly, there are various factors related to student retention. Although a great deal of research has been conducted to examine these factors that influence student attrition, few researchers have attempted to study attrition by getting the perspective of students who leave institutions of higher education. Often, institutional data are used in examining students' demographic characteristics, their financial backgrounds, and their college academic performances. However, institutional data, absent of students' direct feedback, give little guidelines regarding how to mount successful retention effort.

It is essential for institutions to understand the perspective of the students who left prematurely, if they hope to help students succeed. The purpose of this study was to examine patterns of attrition at a Mid-western Research I institution in two ways. First, institutional data were used to compare students who left prematurely with students who stayed. Second, qualitative data collected from phone interviews with students who left the institution were analyzed and categorized into themes. Specifically, two research questions were addressed: (1) in what ways do students who left the university significantly differ from the students that stayed in the university and (2) what are the primary reasons that students who left the institution gave for their decision to leave?

Methods

Participants

Students who were enrolled in Winter 1997 and not enrolled or not graduated in Fall 1997 were defined as not retained in this study. There were 1,861 students who were not retained. Of these students, 805 were randomly chosen to participate in the phone survey and 622 agreed to participate, a 77.3% response rate. It should be noted that these students may have stopped out or transferred to another institution of higher education. Table 1 compares students who participated in the phone survey and all students who left the university. The phone survey participants included 87% non-minority students, 5% African American students, 4% non-African American minority students, less than 1% international students, and 2% of students were from unknown ethnic origins. Approximately, 47% of the participants were male students. Regarding student enrollment level, 40% of the participants were freshmen; 30% were sophomores; 19% were juniors; and 11% were seniors. Generally, phone survey participants were more likely than all retained students to be non-minority students, freshmen, and sophomores. Additionally, phone survey participants had a slightly higher mean high school percentile rank (i.e., 60.24%) than all students who left the university (i.e., 56.21%). There were no gender differences or differences in mean ACT scores between phone survey participants (i.e., 24.12) and all students who left the university (i.e., 24.27).

Insert Table 1 about here

Instrument

This study used institutional data and data from the phone survey to examine student retention. The phone survey was an institutionally developed instrument. Participants were asked if they agreed or disagreed to a list of possible reasons for leaving the university. The survey also asked students to indicate the primary reason that they left the university, an open-ended question.

Students' responses to the open-ended question were categorized. Four categories of reasons for leaving were identified. These included academic, financial, campus services, and personal reasons.

Additionally, several students indicated that they had not left the university. Under each category, except financial reasons, there were multiple sub-categories. The two researchers coded each of the 612 students' responses independently. The level of agreement was about 80%. After several discussions regarding the coding differences, revisions were made and both researchers agreed upon a final coding to all the responses.

Results

Characteristics of Students Who Left

There were 15,777 students enrolled for the 1997 winter semester and 1,861 students (11%) left the institution by the fall 1997 semester. Table 2 summarizes the ethnic characteristics of students who left the university. While African American students were least likely to leave the university, non-resident international students were most likely to leave the university. About 10.9% of African American students, 11.4% of Caucasian students, 13.6% of Native American students, 16.2% of Hispanic students, and 19.4% of international students left. Chi-square analysis showed that ethnic difference between students who left and students who stayed was statistically significant at the .001 level. However, the difference accounted for less than 1% of the variance.

Insert Table 2 about here

Other student background characteristics examined included gender, student enrollment level, ACT composite score, high school percentile rank, and whether or not students received educational loans. These results are also summarized in Table 2. Male students were more likely to leave the university than female students. About 12.4% of male students and 11.3% of female students left the university without a degree. Student enrollment level was negatively related to retention. About 16.2% of freshmen, 12.5% of sophomores, 10.7% of juniors, and 9.2% of seniors left prematurely. Students who had educational loans were more likely to leave than students who did not have loans. Students who had lower high school percentile rank and lower ACT composite scores were more likely to leave the

university than better academically prepared students. The mean ACT composite scores and high school percentile rank for students who left were 24.27 and 57.7%, respectively. In contrast, the mean ACT composite scores and high school percentile rank for the retained students were 25.2 and 68.2%, respectively. However, these differences accounted for less than 3% of the variance in retention.

Backwards stepwise logistic regression models were run to determine whether some of the variables from institutional data predicted retention. Predictor variables included in the initial regression model were students' high school percentile rank, ACT composite score, whether or not students received educational loans, whether or not students received educational gift aid, and gender. Because data were not available for all students, logistic regression models were run for 12,878 students. 1,178 of these students were not retained. Table 3 summarizes the results of the final logistic regression model. Two measures of students' previous academic performance were positively related to retention (i.e., high school percentile rank and ACT composite scores). Whether or not students had received loans was negatively related to retention and upper level students were more likely to stay than lower level students. Whether or not a student received gift aid, and gender were not related to retention.

Insert Table 3 about here

Students' Agreement or Disagreement with Reasons for Leaving the Institution

Students who left the university prematurely reported several different reasons for leaving. Table 4 shows that students mostly left because of family or personal problems, unexpected financial difficulties, uncaring faculty, unavailability of academic advice, or lack of interest in the academic programs they were in.

Insert Table 4 about here

While family or personal problems and unexpected financial difficulties were the top two non-academic reasons students cited for their premature departure, many students left because of academic

reasons regarding academic programs or faculty. More than 37% of the participants agreed that they left because of family or personal problems. About one in every three students (32%) agreed that they left because of unexpected financial difficulties. More than one out of every four students (30%) agreed that they left because they felt faculty did not care about students, they could not get the academic advice they needed about courses and programs (26%), or they did not like the academic programs in their area of interest (26%).

Fewer students indicated that they left because the academic programs were too challenging, not challenging enough, that they did not like the social atmosphere, living in the city, or living on campus. While only seven percent of the students agreed that the academic program was not challenging, twelve percent of the students agreed that they left because the academic program was too difficult. Slightly more than thirteen percent of the students agreed that they left because they were not admitted to the academic program in their area of interest. About fourteen percent reported that they did not like living in the city and fifteen percent reported they disliked the living arrangements and the social atmosphere.

These data are striking because of the lack of consensus for reasons why students left the institution. For example, the item that received the lowest level of disagreement was, "I left because I had personal or family problems." However, more than 60% of participants disagreed with this statement. In other words, there were not any particular items that were endorsed by the majority of students as reasons they decided to leave.

These data are also striking because of the high degree of overlap that participants indicated as a reason for leaving. Although no more than 37.5% of participants agreed with any particular reason for leaving, most respondents agreed with more than one reason. Only slightly more than 32% of participants agreed with one reason for leaving the institution. More than 22% agreed with two reasons for leaving the institution and over 45% agreed with three or more reasons for leaving. Clearly, there are multiple reasons for students' decisions to leave the institution.

Qualitative Responses to Reasons for Leaving the University

Students' responses to the open-ended question – "What is the primary reason that you left the university" – were analyzed and coded into five general categories by both researchers: academic, financial, campus services, personal, and students who indicated that they had not left the university. Of the 612 respondents, 12 students had three different reasons for leaving and 107 students had two different reasons for leaving. Therefore, the final number of responses was 740. Each percentage was calculated by dividing the total number of participants by the number of responses in each category. Therefore, the percentages represent the percentage of respondents endorsing each response.

According to the qualitative data, academic factors, personal factors, and financial factors were the most often endorsed reasons for leaving. Table 5 shows the number and percentage of students who left for these reasons.

Insert Table 5 about here

Academic Factors. As shown in Table 5, 376 students (61.44%) indicated that the main reason for them to leave the university was because of academics. These reasons included mismatch between institution programs and students' interests, unsatisfactory classes, unsatisfactory instructors and advisors, unsatisfactory students' academic performance and general academic reasons. Of these students, 168 students (27.45%) did not feel there was a good academic "fit" between their interests and what the university was offering. Some students were not interested in or did not like the programs in which they were enrolled. In 117 cases (19.12%), they transferred to other institutions where they found better "fit" because of their choice of programs, better programs, closeness to home, better price, or faster graduation. Examples of responses included:

- "I was just unhappy about the major I chose and [the university] didn't offer aviation and [the university] doesn't do that and also because they are somewhat expensive, I could have taken a few more courses that I might need in aviation but is kind of expensive. I'm not going to school now."

- "Overall, I was very unhappy with the program setup."
- "I changed majors to [A], and found a better program at [another institution]."
- "My major wasn't offered here. I wanted to major in Pharmacy."

Problems with classes were a reason for 26 students (4.25%) to leave this university. Some of these students found classes too big, too many TAs teaching, or classes not available for them to take. For instance, one student commented, "I was uncomfortable with the number of people in classes. The classes were too large."

Lack of attention from faculty or poor teaching and advising was also related to 67 (10.95%) students' premature departure. One student left because of "the lack of attention by teachers and lack of concern." Another student said, "I felt that professors and teachers didn't care about their students." "Lack of advice and not feeling I knew what to do" was the reason for another student to leave.

One hundred and five students (17.16%) left because of poor academic performance. Thirty one (5.07%) of these students' grades were not good enough to be admitted to the programs in which they were interested. Many (61 students or 9.97%) students left simply due to poor academic performance. As one student indicated, "my grades, socializing a little more than studying, partying too much." Some (11 students or 1.80%) left involuntarily; they were dismissed because of their poor academic performance.

Financial Factors. Financial problems were the main reasons for 100 (16.34%) students to leave prematurely. According to the institutional data analysis, whether students had received loans negatively impacted retention. Responses for this category were fairly short and simple – financial reasons.

Campus Services. As Table 5 shows, 20 students (3.27%) cited campus services as the main reason for leaving. These included problems with housing, administration, parking, or other campus facilities. Some of the examples of response for this category included:

- "Mostly it was just the overall living situation."

- "[I] was tired of red tape. I was being passed off. No personal attention. They sent me round and round."
- "Parking is a problem. I could never get to class."

Personal Factors. Personal factors varied a great deal. They included general personal problems (e.g., getting married, family problems), student illness or family illness, not liking the university or the city, being homesick, accepting a job, and not liking the social environment. Two hundred and ten students (34.31%) gave personal reasons for their premature departure. Of these students, 79 (12.91%) students simply stated that personal problems made them leave. Twenty-five students (4.08%) left because of illness and another 25 students left because they did not like the university or the city. Twenty-two students (3.59%) wanted to move back home. Twenty-three students (3.75%) left either because they socialized too much or they did not enjoy the social environment. Eighteen students (2.94%) accepted job offers before they graduated. Other students left without a degree because of social reasons, burned out on school or they found it too difficult to be a non-traditional student. Some of the examples for this category included:

- "I had family obligations and family problems for a few months."
- "Because I became pregnant."
- "My husband took up another job which didn't permit childcare."
- "Health problems."
- "It was the university environment. I am at Georgia State now; it's right in the middle of Atlanta. It is not so much of a college life style and I like that a lot better."
- "I was homesick and missed my family."
- "Because I wasn't concentrating on my studies because I was partying too much."
- "Social life not satisfactory."
- "Got a job in my career field."

Students Who Did Not Leave. Students in this category indicated that they had not left the university. Thirteen students (2.12%) said they were taking time off for a break and 11 students (1.8%) reported that they had graduated or that they were accepted to professional school without a degree. Ten students (1.63%) were doing off-campus internships or were finishing last few hours by correspondence. Examples of responses in this category included:

- "I just took some time off and will hopefully go back soon."
- "I only had three credits, and I am completing my last three hours through correspondence."
- "Decided to do an internship and [I am] coming back."

In summary, according to the results of this study, although students' background characteristics were statistically different for the retained and not retained students, the differences did not have substantial effect on student retention. Both quantitative and qualitative data showed that there were a variety of reasons for leaving without a degree from the university including academics, personal, financial, and campus services.

Limitations and Further Studies

Student retention is a complicated issue. Although the results of this study provide insights into the study of attrition, there are several limitations. First, this study was done only at one institution. Certain aspects of the findings on student attrition may not apply to other institutions. For instance, large class size or lack of personal attention may not be an issue for smaller institutions. Second, freshman and sophomore students were more represented than junior and senior students in the sample. Finally, several areas warrant further study. For instance, it is not clear whether students who cited financial reasons for premature departure were socio-economically disadvantaged or whether their spending habits were different from other students. It is also not clear whether different class level students would have different focus on reasons for leaving. Future studies should look into financial reasons for leaving and should include a focused examination of reasons for premature departure by different class levels.

Discussion and Implementation

In order to be accountable to students, parents, state legislature, and the general society, institutions of higher education are increasingly strengthening their assessment efforts. Results of this study provided insights into the study of attrition for this particular university. An analysis of the institutional data indicated that students who had performed better in high school or had higher ACT scores were more likely to persist than students who did not perform well in high school or on their ACT exam. Results of this study confirm earlier studies that students' previous academic performance influences student retention (Arnold, Mares, & Calkins, 1986; Moline 1987; Nora, 1987; Tinto, 1993).

However, regarding ethnicity, results of this study only partially support the previous research that minority students are less likely to be retained than non-minority students (Arnold, Mares, & Calkins, 1986; Tinto, 1993). While Hispanic students were more likely than Caucasian students to leave, African American students had a higher retention rate than any other ethnic group in this study. One possible explanation is that great efforts, including retention programs and scholarships, have been made at this university to increase the retention of African American students. These data suggest that these efforts may have been successful. Unfortunately, other minority students do not seem to have benefited from these efforts. The apparent success of programs to increase retention of African American students are, however, encouraging that future and similar efforts with other minority groups will experience a degree of success. It is important to note here that the high percentage of international students who left the university could be students who were enrolled for the Intensive English Program (i.e., an English as a second language training program) for only a semester or a year.

A student's financial status is an important factor in a student's persistence in higher education. This is strongly supported by the qualitative data. Quantitative data also showed that educational loans had a small negative effect on persistence. It is possible that individual patterns of money management or unexpected extraordinary expenses, more than family income or receipt of gift aid, are more likely to reflect a student's financial ability to attend the institution. Interventions providing financial counseling or financial aid that alleviates extraordinary financial burdens may be needed.

Regarding why students left the university, it is striking that there is no consensus in the responses as shown by both the quantitative and qualitative data (see Tables 4 and 5). These results reveal a wide diversity in the reasons that students leave college. It is also important to note that students were likely to have more than one reason for leaving. Often there were several factors contributing to students' decisions to leave the university. Although it seems that a university does not have much control over some of the factors (e.g., personal illness, financial factors), certainly a university can create an environment that encourages student involvement or integration academically and socially. Therefore, students would not have as many academic or social problems that encourage them to leave the university prematurely.

In light of these results, no single intervention strategy is likely to provide the desired outcomes – increased retention and ultimately increased graduation. Any successful plan will necessarily rely upon multiple interventions that address a wide variety of student needs. Given the variety of reasons students cited for leaving the university without a degree, it may be beneficial to establish a centralized center that would be responsible for coordinating multiple interventions. Services essential to student success should be included in the center. Some examples of services that may be provided by this center include professional and peer advising to assist students with both academic and financial advising, a learning center to provide students with academic tutoring, and student organizations to provide students with social support and involvement. This should be a comfortable and inviting environment supportive of activities that contribute to students' involvement in their studies. At the same time, students could also get social support when needed. Within the context of such a center, the following interventions could be implemented:

(1) *Establish an Early Alert System.* Many of the participants in this study cited poor academic performance as a reason for premature departure from the university. An early alert system could have been helpful to these students. Rather than wait till the end of the semester to inform the students of their failure, the university could set up a system in which professors

and instructors give students feedback as early as possible. Students could seek help early and thereby, prevent failing the course.

(2) *Fully Utilize the Campus Learning Center.* Students who are experiencing difficulties with classes could make better use of the on campus learning center where tutoring is available. It is possible that students who left because of poor grades were not aware that tutoring at the learning center was available to all students. Faculty members and advisors could refer students to the learning center and in some cases may help to establish the initial contact for the students.

(3) *Enhance Financial Resources and Strengthen Financial Advising.* It is clear from the qualitative data that many of the students left the university without a degree on account of insufficient financial resources. It is true that there are many options to finance a student's higher education. However, students should be made aware of all the possible financial aid packages that they are eligible to receive. Often it is the university's responsibility to help the neediest students to find an acceptable financial aid package.

(4) *Strengthen Professional and Peer Advising Efforts.* The advising system could be strengthened so that professional and peer advising is available when needed. The study shows that many students left when they did not like the programs they were enrolled in. A strengthened advising system could enable students to find programs within the university that may suit their interests better. In those cases, they would not have to leave the university. Other institutional studies (Li, 1997) indicated that students have expressed a need for a peer advising system where an upper classman offers advice to freshman or sophomore students. Often students feel more comfortable to turn to their peers for advice. The availability of peer advising from within the major may help some students to learn more about their programs and therefore prevent students from premature departure. The peer advising system could be established in the Student Success Center.

Besides the establishment of such a center, increase in the number of Freshman Interest Groups (FIGs) would help alleviate the retention problems and eventually enhance student's success. It has been found that FIG students achieved higher grade point averages, that FIG students reported higher gains in areas surveyed, and that FIG students were retained at a higher rate (Student Life Studies, 1998). Freshman Interest Groups are small groups of 15 to 20 freshman students organized into different interest groups, for instance, Math and Engineering, Political Science, Arts and Humanities, and The Life Sciences. Students in FIGs co-enroll in classes and most of them live on the same residence floors. Since they co-enroll and live close, it is easier for these students to make friends and establish their social support group. Furthermore, it is convenient for these students to have study partners. It is obvious that FIGs have been found very successful in helping students become socially and academically integrated into the university environment. FIGs success stories should multiply.

In conclusion, student's premature departure from this university was due to various reasons. Multiple factors caused students' leaving without a degree. Consequently, there is no single strategy that the institution can implement which will have a substantial increase in retention. Institutions hoping to increase retention must implement a variety of strategies to meet the variety of students' needs. At the same time, all constituencies in higher education have an important role to play in making students' college experience successful.

> College student retention is a campus-wide responsibility. It starts with an attitude that suggests the institution exists to serve students. This attitude should permeate the entire campus – in chief administrative offices, classrooms, and the serving line in the cafeteria. Everyone on the campus – faculty, administrators and support staff – has an important contribution to make as a potent retention agent (Noel, 1978, p. ix).

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Table 1. Comparisons of Students Who Participated in Phone Survey and All Students Who were Not Retained

Ethnicity	% Phone Survey	% All Not Retained
American Indian/Alaskan Native	.34	.48
Asian or Pacific Islander	1.35	3.12
Black, Non-Hispanic	4.71	5.53
Hispanic	2.19	1.88
Non-Resident International	.17	5.00
White, Non-Hispanic	89.39	81.52
Unknown Ethnicity	1.85	2.47
Gender		
Female	52.36	50.46
Student Level		
Freshman	40.07	28.64
Sophomore	30.81	25.90
Junior	18.69	21.49
Senior	10.44	23.97

Table 2. Students' Characteristics and Retention

Students Characteristics (N)	% Not Retained
Ethnicity	
American Indian/Alaskan Native (66)	13.64
Asian or Pacific Islander (408)	14.22
Black, Non-Hispanic (942)	10.93
Hispanic (216)	16.20
Non-Resident International (480)	19.38
White, Non-Hispanic (13,357)	11.36
Unknown Ethnic Background (308)	14.94
x**2 = 39.104, df = 6, p < .001	
Gender	
Female (8313)	11.30
Male (7464)	12.35
x**2 = 4.224, df = 1, p < .05	
Student Level	
Freshman (3299)	16.16
Sophomore (3873)	12.45
Junior (3732)	10.72
Senior (4873)	9.15
x**2 = 98.754, df = 3, p < .001	
Received Educational Loan	
Received Educational Loan (3788)	11.96
Did not Receive Educational Loan (11989)	11.74
x**2 = .128, df = 1, p = ns	

Table 3. Logistic Regression Model of Student Characteristics and Retention.

Variable	b	SE	z	p	e(b)
ACT Composite Score	.0470	.0088	.0995	.001	1.048
High School Percentile	.0091	.0012	.1263	.001	1.009
Received Educational Loan	-.1609	.0689	-.0384	.05	0.851
Student Level	.3172	.0283	.1962	.001	1.373
African-American	.3047	.1327	.0401	.05	1.356
Hispanic	-.4879	.2231	-.0302	.05	0.614
Intercept	-.1250				

-2LL = 7623.44
x**2 = 256.41, df = 6, p < .001

Table 4. Students Agreement or Disagreement with Reasons for Leaving the Institution

I left because	% agree	% neutral	% disagree
I had family or personal problems	37.5	2.4	60.1
I had unexpected financial difficulties	32.2	3.4	64.5
The faculty did not care about students	30.1	5.3	64.1
I could not get the advice needed about course and programs	26.2	3.5	70.2
I didn't like the academic program in my area of interest	26.0	3.2	70.1
I found classes to be poorly taught	21.7	6.1	72.0
I could not get into wanted classes	17.7	2.7	79.5
I didn't like living arrangements	15.4	0.5	83.6
I disliked the social atmosphere	15.2	2.1	82.8
I didn't like living in this city	14.3	3.7	81.2
I was not admitted to the academic program in my area of interest	13.4	1.8	83.7
I found the academic program too difficult	12.2	3.5	83.9
I found the academic program was not challenging	7.2	3.2	89.6

Table 5. Main Reasons Given by Students for Leaving the University

Reasons for Leaving	Number	Percent
1. ACADEMIC	**376**	**61.44%**
A. Institution programs and student mismatch	*168*	*27.45%*
(a) The university doesn't have program interested in	23	3.76%
(b) Didn't like program in major	17	2.78%
(c) Didn't like course requirements outside major	4	0.65%
(d) Transferred	117	19.12%
1) Program the university doesn't offer	22	3.59%
2) Closer to home	20	3.27%
3) "Stronger" program than the university	17	2.78%
4) Smaller school	7	1.14%
5) Accepted into program (at another school)	30	4.90%
6) Cheaper	8	1.31%
7) Graduate faster	6	0.98%
8) Sports	5	0.82%
9) No reason given	2	0.33%
(e) Undecided major	7	1.14%
B. Classes	*26*	*4.25%*
(a) Too big	17	2.78%
(b) Class availability	5	0.82%
(c) Too many TAs	4	0.65%
C. Instructors and advisors	*67*	*10.95%*
(a) Lack of personal attention or unfriendly faculty members	35	5.72%
(b) Lack of advising or poor advising	15	2.45%
(c) English language ability of TAs	6	0.98%
(d) "Not happy with classes"	11	1.80%
D. Student performance	*105*	*17.16%*
(a) Couldn't get into program interested in	31	5.07%
(b) Poor grades	61	9.97%
(c) Dismissed	11	1.80%
(d) Not academically prepared	2	0.33%
E. General academic reasons	*10*	*1.63%*

(To be continued)

(Table 5 continued)

	Number	Percent
2. FINANCIAL	**100**	**16.34%**
3. CAMPUS SERVICES	**20**	**3.27%**
A. Housing/roommate problem	11	1.80%
B. Financial Aid Office	3	0.49%
C. Passed from office to office and/or red tape	2	0.33%
D. Other university services	4	0.65%
4. PERSONAL	**210**	**34.31%**
A. Personal problems/issues	79	12.91%
B. Illness – personal or family	25	4.08%
C. Accepted job offer in career field	18	2.94%
D. Didn't like the university or the city	25	4.08%
E. Girl/boy friend problem	1	0.16%
F. Not "ready" for college (not "mature" enough)	4	0.65%
G. Moved closer to home 22 3.59%		
H. Socialized too much 7 1.14%		
I. Burned out on school	8	1.31%
J. Social reasons	16	2.61%
K. Too hard to be non-traditional/part-time at MU	5	0.82%
5. DIDN'T REALLY DROP OUT-WILL FINISH	**34**	**5.56%**
A. Stopped-out	13	2.12%
B. Graduated	9	1.47%
C. Finishing last hours by correspondence	6	0.98%
D. Off campus internship – returning to the university	4	0.65%
E. Accepted into professional school without degree	2	0.33%

Note. The total number is 740 due to some students' multiple reasons for leaving.